

CITY OF NEWARK, NJ'S AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview With Hortense Powell -- July 2, 1998

Q: My name is Anne Marie Dicky-Kemp. I'm an interviewer for the Krueger-Scott Mansion Cultural Center African-American Oral History Project. Today, Thursday, July the second, 1998, I'm at the home of an interviewee. The time is 2:05 p.m. Good afternoon. How are you?

Powell: Oh fine, thank you. How are you?

Q: Could you please state your name?

Powell: Hortense Williams Powell.

Q: Your date of birth.

Powell: I was born July 6, 1930.

Q: Your place of birth.

Powell: I was born right here in Newark, New Jersey, at Dr. Kenney Hospital, which at the time was on Kinney Street, just above high street. He was a black doctor.

Q: What is your occupation?

Powell: I'm a registered nurse. Retired at the present.

Q: How far did you go in school, Mrs. Powell?

Powell: I went as far as a baccalaureate degree, which is a BS degree, from Seton Hall. I trained

at Newark City Hospital in Newark and then I went to Seton Hall University for my bachelor's.

Q: What area of nursing did you work?

Powell: I worked first for about six months after I finished school in 1952 at the hospital in the newborn nursery for six months. And then I worked six years with public health work in Newark. And then I went into school nursing in Newark, and I remained in school nursing until 1992 when I retired.

Q: Could you tell me the name of the person you married, when and where?

Powell: I married Vincent Oswald Powell and that was in 1956, and we got married in Jamaica, West Indies. And then about six, eight months later he migrated to the United States.

Q: Would you share with us how you met your husband?

Powell: I met my husband through relatives. I had gone to Jamaica to meet relatives of my father's. And we met that way, and then we corresponded and then one thing to the other we married, and then he came here to America and we set up housekeeping.

Q: What kind of work did or do your husband do?

Powell: Well, while he was in Jamaica he was working with the film unit. Because after the war, the Second World War, he had been in the Royal Air Force. You know they conscripted the people from the islands, the British islands, and then they had something like we had here after the war, they could stay on and learn a trade and he stayed and he learned how to be a visual aid technician cause they were gonna open up a visual aid unit, a government unit, in Jamaica. So he did that. Now when he came to this country, he looked for work in that field, but he never did find anything, and, of course, you just can't look forever. So he started to work at the place called

Remco in the plastic industry. They made toys. So he stayed there as a matter of fact, and when Remco closed here, then he went to another plastic company and he worked there. So he stayed in that area until about 1986. I think it was 1986 he retired, and then after he retired, he worked in the school system as a teacher's aide, part time, like I think three hours a day as a teacher's aide for about six years, and then he retired completely for good.

Q: Could you tell me the names of your children?

Powell: My oldest girl is Lorraine. Her married name now is Jackson. And I have twins, Stephanie Powell and Patricia Powell.

Q: When was, what is the date of the birth of your children?

Powell: My oldest Lorraine was born in January, 1958. And then the twins were born in February of 1963.

Q: And they were born in Newark, New Jersey?

Powell: They were actually, we were living in Newark, but they we were born in Belleville at Clara Meds Hospital. That's the hospital.

Q: Could you please tell us your father's name and his place of birth?

Powell: My father's name was Ebenezer Isaah Williams, and he was born in Chapelton, Jamaica, West Indies.

Q: And what was your father's occupation?

Powell: My father was an electrician, and he was also a storekeeper.

Q: Please tell us your mother's name and place of birth.

Powell: My mother's name was Francis Webb, and Webb was her maiden name, and she was born in Brooklyn, New York, in nineteen hundred.

Q: And what was your mother's occupation?

Powell: My mother actually when she was younger, she was in the store. She never really worked except in the store and helping out my father. Then in 1945, she got a job at Maxwell Union's Radio Tube Corporation. That was here in Newark. And I don't know what actually she did, but I know it had something to do with the setting of the wires in the radio tubes. And then in, she worked for ten years, in 1955 they had some, they had a strike and they were having labor problems and all, and Maxwell Union closed down about 1955, 56. And my mother, she, you know, she stopped working.

Q: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

Powell: Yes.

Q: How many?

Powell: I have five brothers and sisters. Actually, there were nine children in my family. Three died in infancy. That would be like around nineteen, in the early 1920s, say 23, 25, 24. But there were six of us living. One has subsequently died.

Q: Could you just tell me the names of all your sisters and brothers in the order of their birth?

Powell: Ebenezer was a junior.

Q: Could you add their birthplace?

Powell: They were all born in Newark.

Q: Okay.

Powell: Ebenezer, Archibald, Shirley, then I come in there, and Nella and Alton. And the three that died with childhood diseases. They all died before they were two years old. So that would be Edwin, Etta and George.

Q: Can you tell me how your parents happened to settle in Newark? Do you recall them ever telling you how they happened to migrate to Newark?

Powell: Well, my father came to Newark, came actually to America in 1913. September, 1913. He came to enter Tuskegee Institute which was in Tuskegee, Alabama. He arrived in New York port, and then he had to go down to Mobile and from Mobile he went to Tuskegee, which is, you know, right within distance of each other. But he came here by boat. He stayed at Tuskegee for about a year. Then he didn't like it down there because of the, really, he didn't like conditions in the south. So since he had come, I believe, since he had come to New York and he had seen New York and he was absolutely flabbergasted. As you well know, that must have happened coming from a little island like Jamaica and then arrive in New York City. He was sort of like, it was almost like a fantasy thing for him. For even, for that just short time that he was there. So that probably influenced his leaving the south also. So, but he stayed at Tuskegee about a year. He did stay there about a year. And then he came up to, he decided he would apply at Howard. Cause Howard was further north. So Howard's in Washington. So came to Howard University and he stayed at Howard University for about a year. And then he left Howard and he made his way up to New York. And what he did, there was a school in New York called the New York Electrical School, that's what they called it. I haven't looked into it, but it probably was the forerunner of something there because he entered there, and he graduated from that school, and,

you know, as an electrician. And this must have, and then he lived in New York for a while, and then he came over to Newark. And he started out by having a room in New York. But he was doing some electrical work, and it was at the time that a lot of places were turning over in Newark from gas to electricity. So he was able to get work. And although he had applied to a lot of places for work, and they didn't hire him because they didn't hire blacks then in that type of work. And then he wanted to do the kind of work he knew how to do, and he didn't want to be a custodian or janitor or that type of thing. And as a matter of fact, he even applied to the Edison Lab, Thomas Edison Lab, and, of course, they told him that he didn't, you know, they didn't have anything available. But finally, I don't know exactly when and for how long he worked there, but he worked at Westinghouse. That was on Plain and Orange Streets. He worked at Westinghouse, they put him on at Westinghouse as a meter reader. In the meantime, he would do like work for other, you know, he would do work for other people and he'd do it on the side. So that's how he. And then he stayed in Newark, you know, and stayed in Newark.

Q: And how about your mother? How did she get to Newark?

Powell: She came to Newark. She was born in nineteen hundred. And they were living in Brooklyn. Her mother died in 1902, in childbirth. And the father was taking care of her and her sister because she had a sister who was a year older than she was. And he had some relatives, and they lived in Yonkers, and by this time, they had probably come down to Brooklyn. And he had relatives in Virginia. And during the summer they would go down there sometimes because they were very small, and the relatives helped to him back and forth. But actually, he had the full custody of them, and they were living, and he continued to live there in Brooklyn. Then when they got, when my mother was five and my aunt was about six, then he put them in boarding school in New Brunswick. It was a place called the Rice Literary and Industrial Institute. It was down in New Brunswick. And they stayed there. My mother was five when she went. And they stayed there til she was thirteen. And then at that time, my grandfather remarried and brought them up to live in New York with his second wife and they started another family, and they were living, at that time, at 201 Central Avenue in Newark. And my grandfather when he came here,

he had a brother that was here. Name was Moses Webb, and probably through his brother, who was working at the time at Ludlow & Squire, which was a hardware at 97 Market Street in Newark, he got on as a teamster. That means what we call teamster now, a truck drivers, but what they called teamsters then, they drove the horse, they had horses and wagons. And he delivered hardware and picked up hardware and things like that because it was a big company here. They had a stable down there, and his brother worked in the stables tending the horses, and he drove, I guess you'd call it, drove a wagon, you know, delivering. And he actually worked there until he died. He died in 1927, and he was still working there. That was the only job really he had here in Newark.

Q: Mrs. Powell, do you remember anything about the neighborhoods that you grew up in while you were in Newark?

Powell: Well, I was born at 117 Academy Street in 1930. And what was significant really about that was my father had a store there. It was called Williams Fancy Grocery Store. So just about, I guess you'd call it a general store. And as a matter of fact, he would even like, at that time, you know, they used oil stoves, popular oil stoves like the Florence Heater and massage machines were starting to come out. And he being an electrician and like that, what he would do is even he would order, if you needed something, he could order from the catalogue. Catalogues were big at that time. He would order from the catalogue and get, you know, what you want. Anyway, we lived above, my mother and father lived above the store, but they were behind the store was the Morris Canal. And they were getting ready, they were dredging the Morris Canal getting ready to lay down drain and filler bars. So my father had to move because they were tearing down all of those houses on that side of Academy Street all the way up the street. So they were tearing down that side, so he had to, he moved across the street to 114 Academy Street.

And what kind of neighborhood was? It was a mixed neighborhood because we're talking about the area that was two blocks up from Bamberger's department store. One block, two blocks in from Market Street and the Hall of Records, the County Courthouse. We talked about that. And as I said, right in the area where the Morris Canal was. Plain Street, High Street. The

neighborhood was a mixed neighborhood, and I guess you would call it mixed residential, industrial, business. Everything. You know. There was a big factory up the street. Spinoff was a very, I don't know what they made, but this Spinoff factory. They're building this hill here today. I think it's part of, I believe it's part of Rutgers. That big white building that you have the Rutgers Bookstore in there. But anyway, Greeks, Turks, immigrants. Italians, blacks, a few born here, but mainly migrated from the south because it was industrial around here and you could get jobs. So a lot of people moved into, you know, they came into Newark. Whites, blacks, whatever, you know.

And the children I went to school with, I went to Burnett Street School, they were mainly the same thing. One or two Chinese families. But not much then. I don't recall Spanish people at all as a child. I don't recall Spanish people living in my area of Newark, you know. And they might have been there, but I didn't see them, I don't remember Spanish people coming into Newark until after the Second World War. Til after the Second World War did I actually see Spanish, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Portuguese, there were enough that I could say, oh, you know. Cause they mostly lived in New York, you know, at that time. But when I was a little girl, we didn't have that, they were here but not to that number where you could say, they were Spanish people here. So, we probably had in Burnett Street School a couple of families. In fact, since I've gotten older, I know a person from Puerto Rico whom I worked with who was actually went to that school and was my age. So, therefore he was there. Now maybe I just didn't recognize them as such, you know, because when you're little, I mean, you know, you don't think about people in terms of what they are. Most of the time you think if they're white or they're black or they're Indian, you know, but you don't really think of them in terms of that.

That's the kind of neighborhood. All, mostly all working class, you know, working class people. Their parents worked. My mother was home. My mother didn't work. My father had a store, and used to do work, a lot of work for Italians in Newark re-wiring houses, and he would wire up, redo, repair work and, you know, wire. He always. Cause he wired the house that we lived in. But we also used oil lamps. Sometimes, you talk about the period now where was after the, when I was born now, was after the 29 crash, things were going bad, you know, as far as jobs and people having money and stuff like that. Even when you had a store, had a store you had a

book, you know, that people, you know, I'll pay you on so and so, whatever. But anyway, he did that, and everybody was like, it was the time that 1930 when the depression, you know, depression years when I was small and like that. So.

Q: Did anyone else other than your mother work in the store?

Powell: No.

Q: And you said your father sometimes would extend credit to the?

Powell: Yeah. Well, you had to because, you know, there was so many people out of work. A lot of people, you know, I mean, they didn't really have. In fact, probably because my father could do some electrical work, my mother would, like, if he would have jobs and things like that, he would take and she would like start putting the fixtures together, like at night time, you know, she could do that. Like where you're putting plugs on the things like, and he taught her how to do that. And then, but, you know, there were a lot of us children so, you know, she had between taking care of the children and running the store during the day while he, you know, was out working, or if he had extra jobs to do that he would do on the weekend. I mean, it was, she wasn't able to go to work even if she wanted to go to work outside of that. She'd never be able to work.

Q: What was some of the racial makeup of the customers that would come into your father's store?

Powell: Mainly black people came in the store. Now, when they were building the canal, you had a lot of workmen that would come. And he sold sandwiches. You would have a lot of the workmen, like the Irish and Italian workmen that were working over there on the canal. Blacks, some blacks too I imagine. But they would come in, or maybe the policemen on the beat who were mainly at that time Irish. They would come in maybe get a sandwich, bottle of soda, ice cream or something like that. But mainly his customers were black.

Q: Can you tell me anything else about other neighborhoods you might have lived in in Newark?

Powell: Well, when we left there, my father died in 1938. As a matter of fact, he was, they used to have block dances in Newark, and, you know, they used to have the feasts, and things like the Italians used to have their feast days and things, and they used to have block dances also. And they would string lights and things like that. About two years before he died, he was putting up our lights and making a connection to a pole. I think he was on either Summit Street or Wickler Street. And he was up on a thirty-foot ladder. You know how telephone poles, you make your connection to the pole when you're stringing those lights. And it must have been that he was going to have somebody help him and the person didn't come, but anyway, my brother went with him to hold the ladder. And something happened, you know, he must have got a kick, as they call it, you know, electricity and a spark or something like that, and it threw him or shook him or whatever, and he fell off that ladder down on the ground, fractured his skull, had internal injuries, and he was in the hospital for quite some time. Never fully recovered from the injuries, but he did get back to work, and he did open the store, but he was never well. And two years later, he died. You know, so this is 1938 now, and he had moved the store cause he figured, times were very bad, and he figured well maybe they could do better, and they moved the store to Pennington Street, which is just below McCarter Highway, in another section of town. I think they call that the --

Q: Met.

Powell: Yeah, the Met. Down Met. Fifteenth district, the fourteenth district. They used to call them precincts I think. But anyway, it was either 82 or 92 Pennington Street. My mother didn't want to go down there because she said, if the people are poor up here, she figured that they wouldn't gonna have nothing down there, and then he would be new moving into the area. But that's what he wanted to do that. And it turned out those people down there were poorer than they were where we lived. And then he really did have a book where people, you know, I'll pay you so and so. The relief had come in. The WPA had come in, and stuff like that. You know,

sometimes people would pay; sometimes they didn't. You know. And when we closed up the store, eventually my mother closed it up when he died, it was surprising the number of people that were on the book, you know, but you couldn't collect it, anything. You know, it was just a loss. You know, that was such a lost cause. So, but after that then the WPA and like that, and my mother had the children; she couldn't go to work. So we had to get on role. My brothers weren't old enough to be in the work projects thing. That's what they, you know, the boys, the young men and like that, they had to work projects. So we had to get on, they called it relief at that time. And then later they called it, Children's Guardian. I think it was Board of Children's Guardian, they called it.

Q: Exactly how did that work?

Powell: If you didn't have any job, and or like the father was dead, then, and you had children and you couldn't work. I mean even if you, even if you could find work, you couldn't work cause the children were too little. Right? Then they would, they had the Board of Children's Guardian, and they would send you a check.

END SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE; BEGIN SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

Powell: So then the family continued to receive the state help from the State Board of Children's Guardian until about 1945. My youngest brother was old enough that my mother could go out and work, and she got a job at National Union Radio Tube Corporation. That was in Newark. And she worked there for ten years. And that was 1955. They had labor problems and the union walk out and all of that type of thing. It was after the war, the Second World War. And my mother, the factory closed down and it never reopened, and my mother stopped working. But by this time, this was about 1955, all of us were grown up then. My oldest brother was grown, and I believe he had just gotten married. My next to the oldest had come back from the service. It was 1955. I had gone into school in 1949, and eventually I went into nursing school at Newark State Hospital. And so my mother from the time my father went into the service, of course, then my mother was eligible for widow's pension as a serviceman's wife. So between the widow's pension,

unemployment, we were all grown, she never did look for other employment because she was like 55 years old at that time, and there wasn't a lot that she was able to do anyway so that was it for her.

Q: What other neighborhoods in Newark did you live and what were they like?

Powell: Oh well, you know, at that time, if we left, let's see we left Academy Street when I was like seven or eight. I was about eight, seven or eight, and then we moved to Arlington Street which actually was almost directly across Market Street from Academy Street. Cause where we lived was on the corner of Academy and Cones Alley. Cones Alley is almost like, cause see if you go straight across Cones Alley past Market Street on the other side, it would be Arlington Street. It was in the neighborhood of the Newark Board of Health. In fact, it was right behind there. And in that neighborhood, it was similar, but whites were starting to move out of that neighborhood then. But you had some white families up on William Street. You had St. Mary's Church was two blocks up, and you had St. Bridges Church which was on Plain Street. Just mentioning them so you know just what area I'm talking about. There were still some Irish living in there. Germans. There was a German man that lived two doors down and he sold coffee. We used to call him Mr. Coffee. And then there was an Irish family that lived across the street. They, the Lubackers lived on Frank Street right through the lot. They were like a family of a policemen. I think their son is still. There are Lubackers around but not probably in Newark. You had some Irish that still lived on William Street. But it was more, it was more black. In fact, it was down the street, like sometimes you hear the history of Newark, they will talk about the Kinney Club which was an old, in the old days, let's say the days of the twenties and all, that would be one of those nightclubs that would have like entertainment upstairs, and people would come in from New York. Whites would come in to see the dancers and the stuff like that. You know, that was one of the last remnants of that. There was the burlesque theater. And maybe about, which was in neighborhood, maybe about, you may go about five, four blocks or five blocks and you would see the burlesque theater which was still functioning when we moved into Arlington Street. And that's gone now completely. Not far from another place which is also gone, the Orpheum Theater, which I never

attended because I was a little girl at that time, but it was one of the old theaters that they had and the blacks would go to.

Q: What's the name of it?

Powell: Orpheum Theater.

Q: That was located?

Powell: It was on Washington Street. I can't recall right off hand where, but it was down in that area. But the burlesque, now the burlesque was on Washington and Granford, and they used to have the striptease acts and all that kind of stuff there. But I mean it's not, mostly men went there. You know, burlesque, that was typical burlesque. But anyway, they tore that down now. That's where that parking lot is. That was the next, that was the neighborhood. You know, some people working, some people were not working. Just a mixed, you know, just a mixed neighborhood.

Q: You know any other neighborhoods where you resided in Newark that?

Powell: Well, after I got married, I stayed there with my mother for about a year, and then we got a, we moved to Marie Place. And Marie Place was more, you could say, was a black neighborhood. It wasn't originally black. Marie Place and Belmont Avenue, that developed to black after the soldiers came back after the war and with the GI Bill coming in, and, you know, that's when if you were in the war, you could get your housing with low downpayment and like that. And they started to build them. White people were starting to move out of Newark because they were coming home too. So they, of course, were looking to better themselves. Also, a lot of money was made during the war. People that saved up money sometimes, the soldiers, you know, were sending money home. Different things, times were changing. And so they were getting out of Newark, and people were beginning to sell their houses. But there were housing restrictions, although there wasn't supposed to be. Where in black people couldn't, just because you had the

money, you couldn't move anywhere you wanted to move. You were restricted to certain areas, you know.

Q: Is that certain areas in the State of New Jersey or?

Powell: Certain areas in the state, certain areas in the cities, certain areas in towns, certain areas of new developments, just places that you couldn't, you were confined to. Because the first place, most of that, the people that were living in Newark were moving to, they were moving into the Jewish sections of the city which was the Clinton area. That was the first start and Marie Place was over like in that area, that blacks were buying those houses. Mostly now, I wouldn't say all, mostly owned by Jewish people who were then moving out. And then other whites in other areas that, even like that had apartments, they were moving out. Because they were starting post-war building boom and people were, they were developing land down in south Jersey, people were moving out. Even to say, moving up into Irvington and Maplewood and Millburn and East Orange and Orange. And, you know, people were moving out. Because during the war we had a lot of people that came in because of jobs. And they came in from Pennsylvania, a lot of people from Pennsylvania. And then the whites that were living here, you know, they worked in the factories, and it was a whole, it was a whole thing. Cutting up the rooms and, you know, having, coming in and you had an apartment and maybe you had five rooms, you could rent out two of them, three of them, things like that. It was going on all over the country. Because it was, you know, during the war and just after the war, you know, people needed places. The people that were here they were working. Okay. So that was a lot of rapid social, economic changes that were going on. But after the war, I started that because of saying what kind of a neighborhood Marie Place was. That was one of the areas that white people would move out of and black people were buying the houses. That's the kind of neighborhood. And rapidly it changed. Because it gave the people a chance who owned those houses to sell those houses and make a good profit.

Q: Do you remember what years those could have been?

Powell: What, this transition?

Q: Yes.

Powell: This was something like 1958 for me. Or 59, 60. But that transition began something like about nineteen fifty, maybe 1952, 51, that it really began to move, and really started to snowball. Because number one, the boys were coming back from the army, and like I said, the GI Bill and stuff like that so they could go to school, they could buy houses, and sometimes they would buy a house and their family would move into it. Or maybe their mother had the money, and the son had the GI Bill or vice versa. And then they had this thing came up where, you, prior to that you couldn't buy a house in that area because they wouldn't sell it to you. This was a real estate black out, no pun intended. But you couldn't buy over there. They wouldn't sell you the houses. You know, I mean, there are certain places you're gonna live. And it was subtle, but you knew that they weren't gonna sell it, and you know that you weren't gonna buy it. But then after they started and maybe a few people moved in, and then the people realized that they could get a lot more for their houses than if they sold to some white person.

And they would even open up, that's when the thing, whole thing came up about block busting. You know, you go and maybe a real estate company would say well, have some black family to move in, sell a house to a black family, the white people would kind of get panicky, then they would want to move out because they figured the neighborhood was changing. And then they were also getting a lot more for their houses that their houses were worth. And actually it started to be a real business. You know, sometimes I just think, I didn't know whether the white people were running or whether they were just taking advantage of a good deal. Because they would have never been able to sell their houses to white people for what they got from black people. And then you had whole neighborhoods beginning to change, and the real estate industry was in it to because they were making a profit. And you know how it is with capitalism. Money has to turn over. You know. Money has to turn over. And as long as money is turning over everything is cool. You know. So, but you know, black people paid much more for the property, and even houses that started with the apartment houses. Get one black family in the apartment

houses, and then you know others are going.. But the rents went sky high in those houses. Because I was doing Public Health work, and I visited, you know, black and white, you know. And I would see a house turn, and then I would ask people how much rent they were paying, and in instances I would have visited a white people. Just for a for instance, let's say they were paying twenty-five dollars for the apartment, and that same, when blacks started to move in the apartment, they were paying seventy-five dollars. And supposedly you have some rent control, but I mean, I don't know where it was or what they were doing. You know, a perfectly nice apartment. And it used to bother me because they'd say, oh when you let black people come in, the place runs down. U-uh. When you let black people come in, the people will start moving out and they didn't have the services. I went into apartment houses that, I mean, the super was always there.

Just apartment houses on High Street let's say, cause that's right near High Street. And the superintendent was there and they had a janitor and they polished those brass knobs and they kept the fronts clean and all that. And as blacks people moved in, and these were not. These were people that had jobs. I mean some of them had got, you know, government jobs had opened up for blacks gradually after 1945, little by little. But anyway, and these are people that the soldiers coming back, or maybe they had moved from the south to come up here, you know, after the war. Or just, you know, but people that were capable of paying the rent. They had jobs, you know. But they didn't know it because they were new tenants, but I could see that they stopped the services that they used to give, and they were paying more money. A lot more money. You know. And as people began to move too that were coming up here. People were still renting rooms and stuff like that. They'd take apartments and they would cut em up. You know, like used to be a six family apartment, it would be a three and three. It's a big business going on. They made money in that. They did. They made a lot of money.

But anyhow, when they were gonna, then I moved to where I am now, and I've been here thirty years. I live in High Park Garden Cooperative Corporate Housing, Quitman Street side. They were going to, they started to having plans in the sixties to build a highway. It was going to be going from east to west, straight through town. And it was going to start acquiring land. They'd talk about that, and threw that back and forth for quite a while, but then they decided they were gonna have to build. No, that highway was gonna go from north to south, straight across and

connect with like Routes 1 & 9 and the Turnpike, 95. Okay. So they decided that they were gonna build this Route 78 anyway which was gonna go east and west¹, north Jersey and then connect down to the business districts downtown and 1 & 9 and the airport, etc., etc. And we were in that path so we had to move. So I heard about this place here, which was right back into the Central Ward of Newark. And I tossed it around, and we talked about it. And actually because it was sort of like an experimental type of housing, it was gonna be a cooperative living for low and middle income, and it was gonna be new. I said, well, the guy had three kids and they were gone, and this would probably be best for me. At least even if I only stayed there for five or ten years because it was economically feasible, it was in Newark, and I was working in Newark, and for me it was fine. And it was gonna be new. And I never lived in a brand new house before. So I moved there, here, in 1966, and I've been here ever since. This is prominently, predominantly a black area.

Q: Was it always like that from the beginning?

Powell: From the beginning of what?

Q: When they first opened up the units?

Powell: Yeah. We had maybe three at the most white tenants, and they were interracial marriages. The whites had left High Street, which at one time was mostly whites lived on High Street. They were beginning to move from Clinton Avenue, little by little. And this is, you know, this is the Central Ward. And at one time, now, the Central Ward was a mixed ward. Jewish, Polish, Black. I don't think ever a lot of Italians lived over here, but it had, you know, Germans. But like I said, that all changed rapidly, you know, after the war. Because those Jewish stores that were in on Prince Street and Howard Street and Spruce Street, and like that, a good deal of those people, they lived, just like people did live that had mom and pop stores, they lived either above or they lived behind their stores. You know. And then they started, you know, they started to move. But it was, you know, it was a gradual thing. And some of it just the economic and social

conditions did change, you know. But, anyway, because in grammar school at Morton Street School, it was predominant, when I went there. Let's see I graduated there in 1944. There was most of the kids were black, but it was about one third of those kinds, and in some classes better were white. And at Southside High School, half of my class was white. You know. We had a mixture of Polish, Jewish, refugees from the Second World War, a few Italians. And Irish, you know.

Q: And what about nursing school?

Powell: Now in nursing school, I was, I went in nursing school in 49. I think I was in the third class they admitted black students to. There was no black students admitted to the nursing schools here in Newark. And you had Beth Israel Hospital, you had St. Michael's Hospital, you had Presbyterian Hospital, you had St. James Hospital, you had North City Hospital, you had Lutheran Hospital. I don't know whether they had one over there at Columbus Hospital or not. I can't remember whether there was a nursing school there. But blacks were not admitted. Now in 1945 they passed that fair employment trade act or something like that where if you did any kind of business with the government, was receiving any government aid or anything, then you couldn't discriminate regarding color. So unless a person was so light that they could pass for white, and nobody knew they were black, that was the only way you would get into a nursing school. And I don't know anybody that, you know, in that category and there might have been. You know. And even when it came to working at the hospital as a nurse, you know, you just didn't have it.

That was one of the things that this Dr. Kenney, John Kenney, would open up the hospital there on Kinney Street, that's where I was born. That was one of his things. He was going to bring, in fact, he did, bring up women from the south, and he was supposedly training them to be nurses aides or nurses, or maybe some women who had been nurses in some, you know, southern black hospitals. You know, he would bring them up. His idea was that he was going to open up a hospital here in Newark for blacks.

Q: And he did?

Powell: He did. Yeah.

Q: And it was on West Kinney Street?

Powell: Yeah.

Q: Near where?

Powell: I believe it was 132. You know where that little church is?

Q: Near --

Powell: Near High Street.

Q: Martin Luther King Blvd.

Powell: Yeah. Now it's Martin Luther King Blvd.

Q: And the hospital was called?

Powell: Dr. Kenney Hospital. And I was born there. My mother had all her children in the hospital, Newark City Hospital. You could be a patient there. In fact, at that time, that's way back there now, in the 20s and 30s. You know, like they would take you into the hospital, and you'd stay in the hospital for fourteen days.

Q: For child.

Powell: For childbirth. You could go in there about a week before you would deliver. And then you'd stay there a week. Some people stayed there a little longer than that. You know. But, you

know, you worked around the wards. You rolled bandages and you did different little things, and you helped out, you know.

Q: Until you delivered.

Powell: Yeah. Until you delivered.

Q: Okay.

Powell: But my mother had told my father that she wasn't going to the City Hospital no more. I don't know what happened or why. And she said I'm having this baby, there's a doctor opened up a hospital, and I'm having my baby in Dr. Kenney's Hospital. And, of course, my father, he was a little opposed to this, you know, but he went along with it cause she said if she didn't do that, if he didn't send here there, that she was going to have, deliver by midwife and have her baby, have me at home. And, of course, he didn't want any parts of that. So I was born there. But then after that, my next, the next two kids she had at City Hospital. Now where was I? We were talking about ages and differences. And my experiences at the hospital.

Okay, I decided to go into training. I really wanted to be a doctor. But we're talking about 1948, and my mother didn't have any money. There was no programs or anything like that. All the while I had this burning desire to be a doctor, I had no thoughts at all about how much money, how you got to be a doctor. And, you know, you took money to go to school and like that. Right? So I said, well, I would, you know, I would go into nursing school. City Hospital at that time all you had to have cash was fifty dollars. And then, you know, your supplies or whatever things that you needed to start school. And this is one of the reasons why I went into nursing because my original plan was that I would finish nursing and then that way I would have a job, and then I would be able to then find a way to save enough money or to, you know, and then study medicine. But it didn't work out that. It didn't work out that way. But when I went into training, like I said I was in the third class that they had accepted black students. And I don't know, I kind of think our class was an experimental something because it was. Number one, we only had eight in our class.

The classes were usually larger than that.

Q: When you said eight, the total number?

Powell: Eight total number in our.

Q: Nurses was eight.

Powell: Yeah. In the February of 49 class. They took in classes twice a year.

Q: And of those eight, how many were black?

Powell: And of those eight, three of them were white and five of them were black. You had a girl from Budd Lake, a white girl from Budd Lake, a white girl from Newark, who graduated from West Side High School, and a white girl from Denville. She dropped out after, she didn't make it, you know, after about the first year. She had to drop out. Okay, then we have a black girl from Orange.

END SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE; BEGIN SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

Q: Mrs. Powell, as a black student nurse, how were you treated?

Powell: Generally speaking, I had a very positive experience at the City Hospital. I was a good student. We lived in the nursing home. The nurses home was integrated. You had older nurses who lived there as residents, and you had the student nurses. And we got along well. I couldn't say that overtly I experienced any sort of prejudice whatsoever, and I felt very comfortable. I also felt comfortable on the floor as a student nurse. There are only two incidents that gave me cause to pause with return or zero in on that type of thing. During the senior year, the alumni association usually took two students to the convention, the American Nurses Association Convention in

Atlantic City. And during my senior year, two students were selected, I being one of them. The other one being a white student. And two the white representatives from the alumni association went down with us. I recall we stayed in the Claridge Hotel. First time I had ever been to Atlantic City and the first time I had ever been in a hotel that big. And it reminded me of a castle. And the girl I was with, I don't think she had been anyplace like that either. So we were both rather awed with the whole experience.

But when we got to the hotel, we didn't, neither one of us understood why we had separate rooms. We had an adjoining door, but the door was, I guess it was for groups of people, you could open the door. But anyway, there was an adjoining door, but we had separate rooms. And the two ladies, they stayed together in a room. And we had said, well, we don't need two rooms, we could stay, you know, sleep in the same room and not. But I don't remember how it went at this time or what, but we still, we ended up, we stayed in those separate room. They probably said something to us. But we spent most of our time, either me in her room or she in my room anyway. But the feeling that dawned on me was that I was in that room, and she was in that room because she was white and I was black. And it hadn't really come to the point in New Jersey wherein you had integration in these hotels. In fact, it was still hotels that you really couldn't go in at all.

Q: Okay.

Powell: The larger hotel chains. That, you know, that there wasn't a room available or something. And surely they didn't want white and black in the same room. And I'm sure that that was the basis for that. Although I never, at the time, I never confronted anybody about it. I never asked. You know. But I knew basically why that happened. And the other thing was when it was a scholarship was given to the student who had the highest academic and general all around achievement upon graduation. Had never gone to a black student before. Well, we only had three, four classes, you know, that they had been entered into. But I was the one that was in contention for this scholarship. It was a five hundred dollar scholarship. Doesn't seem much now, but it was a lot at that time. You had to go before the board. You had to fill out, you know, an

application and like that. And this board that did the designation, you know, they go, take you all the way back into high school. You know, what did you do in high school, and so and so and so on. And, of course, I was very active in the high school, and I had, was the secretary of the graduating class. I belonged to the National Honor Society. I had extracurricular activities.

[Interruption] I had been very active in high school, and outside of school, I had a little part time job for the last year in high school, which, you know, helps when you're going up against this time of thing. And I belonged to the Neighborhood House which was in a black neighborhood. I belonged to the so-called black, quote, unquote, Y. And so you would say that I had a good all around, you know, background. Anyway, they put me through a rigorous question. Well, almost as if they didn't believe some of the things I said, although if they had looked on my admission application when I initially went to school, they'd see I was just putting down the things. And I remember it was sort of amusing. You know, there was one person that was just kept questioning me and asking me about my activities, and I just said, you think that's enough or shall I go on?

[Laughter] And somebody kind of chuckled a little bit. I guess maybe, I don't know whether because of the way I said it or because that they were thinking that it was a bit too much too. Well, in either case, the end story is, I think that what they were trying to do, certain factions were trying to do, is to not give this scholarship at this time to a black student. So they interviewed the others, they had two other candidates, two white girls, two other candidates, for it. And so what eventually happened to make a long story short, the other girls just took, interviewed for it, but they really didn't want to go on to a get a degree. One said, she told them clearly she really planned to get married. And the other one, for some reason or other, she didn't really want to go to school right at that time. So then that this, they were faced with a dilemma because they either have to give it to me --

Q: Cause you wanted to go on to school.

Powell: Yeah. Oh, I wanted to go on to school. And either give it to me, not give it, or give it half to one of them and half to me. And I think after some deliberation, I guess, or some compromise or whatever goes on behind the doors over the period of the weeks and whatever they

discussed this thing, they decided that they were going to split the scholarship and give two fifty to one and two fifty to the other. So, which was all right, you know, it's all right with me.

Q: So you got two fifty and someone else.

Powell: I got two hundred and fifty dollars instead of the five hundred. And I, of course, immediately, you know, started making my preparations, to at least start. And Seton Hall had an extension down here on Clinton Place in Newark, and I applied there. Because I knew one thing, I was going to have to work and go to school part time. Seton Hall did not accept women students yet on campus. And I didn't have enough money to be a live-in student, even if they had. Because I don't think Seton Hall accepted women students, black or white, until about 1977 on the campus. They built a dorm. Anyway, but I was very grateful and I was very thankful for that because at the time tuition was only twelve dollars and fifty cents a credit. And that two hundred and fifty dollar scholarship allowed me to start to school right away. And I could, like, we finished like in April and I started to school in September. I started Seton Hall in September as a part time student.

And I also started my first job. Not my first job, but the first job after I left the hospital. Cause I worked at the hospital for six months after I finished. And in the meantime, I knew I wanted to do public health work. I took the test for public health nursing in Newark, and it worked out just fine because I started Seton Hall, I started public health nursing, I was off on the weekends, I worked in Newark, the school was right downtown Newark. I could leave work and go directly to school. I was going to school part time nights, and I was working full time days as a public health nurse for the City of Newark Department of Health in the Child Hygiene Division. We ran the Keep Well Stations and we also went around delivered the birth certificates to newborn infants and supervised the mothers.

That was an interesting thing. The doctor who was still there who had started Child Hygiene Division started back in the 30s. He was an older man, older at this time. Dr. Julius Levy. He felt that infant mortality was very high in Newark. And he felt that if we had nurses and like Italian nurses go into Italian neighborhoods. Jewish nurses go into Jewish neighborhoods. If you had a Polish, you know, in a certain district, let the Polish nurse go there. And let black nurses

go into black neighborhoods because his theory was that they would be able to communicate better and they would, it would be more conducive to the parents listening to what they said, coming out to their Keep Well Stations and like that. And they were doing the same thing in the chest divisions. Chest division is where they were monitoring tuberculosis and going out and, you know, supervising those cases. And I think this was a thing that caused them, you know, follow through with this possible, hypothetical theory, will this work. I think this is one of the things that gave the impetus to them hiring more black nurses.

Q: In the Department of Health.

Powell: In the Department, yeah, in the Department of Health. You know. Because you had to go and, you know, you had to go up and different neighborhoods. And like I said, prejudice was alive and well here and pretty strong. It's just that people seemed to just know it was there, know it existed, and you've got to make it. You know, you know you got to be better. You know you got to push, push, push. You know. And then you had some people that, the influx from the south, a lot of people, even though let's say they had no way paying jobs and things like that, they still had it better than where they came from. You know. And that makes a difference too. Anyway, public health was a job that I really, really liked. And I really felt that I was really doing something. Because even from high school, I was one of those people that I couldn't see why certain conditions existed. And I suppose like children now and before and forever, I guess, when you get to be a teenager, you think you know the solutions to all problems, and you can't understand why adults can't get it. And I remember once I wrote a little play which we never did get performed. But, cause our adviser got sick or got cut, whatever happened, he wasn't there. We had to drop it. I think it was a death. Anyway, I was gonna make it so that people didn't have to live in some of the conditions they lived in. You know Newark had a lot of little back houses. Houses behind houses. And you talk about now, you know, in the early 40s, and even when I was public health nurse there was still houses in Newark that had a back house. There were still outhouses in certain sections in Newark which people didn't know. And I didn't know as many existed that it did until I got to be a public health nurse. You know, because I had to go all around.

But, anyway, I just went into public health because I figured that I would be doing something right there at the community level. And, of course, my dream of changing the world changed as I matured. [Laughter] As I really got to be grown rather than, you know, thinking about it and coming to some, you know, knowing then or learning then some of the legalities of life. You know. Both politically, economically, and socially. So, anyway, public health was good.

Again, I didn't notice even then in my relationships with the nurses and my relationship with the white nurses and the black nurses were generally very good. And I liked my job. I was liked by my colleagues. We had association. I had, you know, I was always one that was a joiner. I was on the executive board of the Newark Public Health Nurses. You know. I had no, you know, I had no problem. When I was attending Seton Hall, I only, I ran into, as I look back at it, I ran into two teachers, one male, one female, that I honestly know to myself that they were prejudiced. Outright prejudiced. Covered up nicely. But they were prejudiced. You know. And both in, one was an English teacher male, another was one of the nursing courses, I can't forget what course I took, female, white. And you think that hey, look, you know, like you passed. But that's not it. That's not it to pass. You know. And in both cases, there was no getting around it. So, but anyway, but as I say, I graduated finally from Seton Hall in 1957. After going part time. It takes twice as long to go part time then if you would just go just straight full time student. And nurses at that time, let's say in the latter part of the 50s, they were just starting to get bachelor's degrees.

Q: Degrees.

Powell: Most all, the three year programs had started phasing out then. But, and there was a program I think at Jersey City, then Jersey City State, and Seton Hall had a program. But there was, I can't remember what school it was, but there were a few in the country, in the country now, there were a few four-year college programs which were attached to hospitals. They would do their clinical work in the hospital and academic work at --

Q: College.

Powell: Yeah, at the local university on the college level. And so the degree, the Bachelor of Science degree was just phasing in then. And, you know, it worked out conveniently for me. Stayed in public health, loved it, learned an awful lot, both about the city, about people. I could truly say that I really matured doing public health work.

Q: How long did you stay in public health?

Powell: I stayed there six years. You know. And then I left there and I went into school nursing. And still I'm in the City of Newark, and now I'm doing the, you know, the next step. I moved from babies, to kindergartners, elementary school and higher schoolers.

Q: Okay. You spent how many years in school nursing?

Powell: From 58 to 92. So I think that's thirty --

Q: Long time. [Laughter]

Powell: Thirty-three, thirty-four years.

Q: Mrs. Powell, what church do you belong to?

Powell: I belong to Queen of Angels Church which is now located at 44 Irving Turner Blvd. here in Newark. It's a Roman Catholic Church. And I've been attending Queen of Angels Church since I was seven years old. I mean, at least I got my first holy communion at seven years old. Well, of course, you got to go to catechism and all of that bit. And the reason I believe, the reason I started at Queen of Angels Church was somebody told my mother about it. And, you know, I told you my father died in 1938, injured in 1936, so he had been sick for two years. Now, Queen of Angels Church at the time we were living on Academy Street was right up the hill, up the street. About three, four blocks, so you only had to go straight up. Right? And it was originally, the

original building was at Academy and Whitley Street. And that I went to. Because it was like a mission. Back then, the Catholics were trying to get Negroes to join the church. Because most Negroes are Baptist, Methodist, scattered Presbyterians, scattered Episcopalians. You know, scattered, very few. But then Catholics just started. So really what they said was they were missionary churches. In fact, Queen of Angels was a missionary church. They had started out just like a little, they had a little car, or it was a car or bus or van or something that they would go around, and they would pick up the kids up, you know, for Sunday School or, protestants call it Sunday School, we call it catechism, and for mass on Sunday. You know. And they had that church there on Academy and Whitley Street. Was one story, had a basement. The men of the church, the men of the missionary, built that church. And, you know, we all went to that church.

Now, St. Patrick's had a church right there on, you know, St. Patrick's on Washington and Central Avenue. But, you know, those, that was predominantly an Irish church. Mostly Irish went to St. Patrick's. But children who lived in that area, if you were black, you didn't get your first holy communion and confirmation at St. Patrick's, you came up and you got your, you might have gone there for catechism, but when you got your confirmation and your first holy communion and any other sacrament, you got that at the Queen of Angels, which was the, I would just say, that was the black church, the black mission. You know. So the church was, the church was segregated. Again, being ten, you don't think about that. You know. But then as I grew older, I wondered why it was, there was one or two families, and I don't know how that happened, but one or two families that went to St. Patrick's School because St. Patrick's also had a parochial school. But, now, the first I thought about it was if they went to the parochial school there, if they went to church there on Sunday, why was it that they had to get their first holy communion and the sacraments up at Queen of Angels? You know. And that's the first thing that really started me thinking about that situation. You know. But the church was, the church segregated. The German Catholic church was up here on Irving Turner Blvd. There was a little, that church that, what's his name is in now. It's a Catholic church, but I think they were Lutheran Germans or something like that. They had St. Patrick's, they had St. Joseph, you had St. Casimir's down in the neck, Polish Catholic. You had St. Regis, what's that mixture Irish-German, and Irish-German, what was in that neighborhood, that's the neighborhood I lived. But anyway, they were there. But

the church was segregated. I was very disheartened too when I came to the realization that all Catholics were not the same. Cause now that Queen of Angels was in a mixed Italian black area. But now you had a lot of, on Sundays at the mass, you had a lot of white people that just come to mass because it was in that neighborhood. The nearest one, church then was St. Lucy's, which to this day you have if maybe if any of the Italians that lived in that area who attended that church as little children, if they were still living, they still want to be buried from St. Lucy's church, which is over on Seventh Avenue. And frequently you can, and now even, for some of them are like ninety-five, ninety-something, and their children will bring them back to St. Lucy's when they die. And have their burial from that church. So this has been going on, you know, for years. And you see the limousines going up there, and that church is still standing.

Q: On Seventh Avenue?

Powell: Yeah, it's on Seventh Avenue. Below Clifton Avenue, maybe about two blocks or three blocks. And just above, I don't know I think that's Broadway that comes up over there. Broadway just starts over there by Seventh Avenue. But that was predominantly Italian area. In fact, they used to call that area little Italy. They used to, I mean, there were again black families sprinkled, but basically that was an Italian immigrant area. And that's what St. Lucy's was. You know. And maybe when St. Lucy's was, maybe Lucy was a missionary church for Italians. I don't know. You know. But anyway.

Q: Mrs. Powell, how active has your religious life been?

Powell: Well, I think that as far as I'm concerned, I think that I have an active religious life. I, and I say that to mean that since I was a little girl, religion has always been in my life. Now I'm not like a, as I say, I'm Catholic. I'm not a staunch Catholic, and got to go to church now every Sunday. Back in the days when you couldn't eat meat on Friday, I mean I was, when I was a little kid, I would think I was going to get sick or I was going to die if I didn't eat fish on Friday. But over the period of years I mean, it didn't, you know, I didn't stick to that. And, of course, I went to a

Catholic college, Seton Hall. And Seton Hall, it takes me too long to tell you about that experience. But being a Catholic, you had to take eight credits in religion. If you're a non-Catholic, you took only four credits because it was a Catholic school. And I learned more.

END SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO; BEGIN SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

Powell: I learned a lot of their penance and their beliefs were concerned through the religion courses and the reading that I did at Seton Hall. Some of things I agreed with, some of the things I didn't agree with. And some things I didn't see any sense in at all. But generally, I feel comfortable within the church. I have been to Father Divine's church. I have been to the little church called Church of Illumination. I have been to an Episcopal church. I have been to protestant churches of all denominations. I've been to a Pentecostal church. I have visited, I've never been in an Jewish synagogue, and that was only that I didn't have, I just never had an opportunity to go. But it's nothing to do with the fact that I wouldn't go in there. Cause see when we brought up in catechism, we were taught that you weren't supposed to go into anybody else's church. You were only supposed to go to your own church. My mother never reinforced that belief. Because my mother basically was brought up as a protestant, and most of my brothers and sisters were baptized protestant. So my mother, with my mother and father it was you had to go to church. Some church. And that was it. You know. Now, since we were Catholic, when I raised my three children, I told them that we were Catholic. They went through Catholic grammar school. I told them that since we were Catholic, they had to go to the Catholic church cause I went there. That was my church and I was the one to take them to church. After they got to eighteen years old, they could go to any church they want to. Any church they want to. And it's odd because all three of my daughters go to protestant churches.

Also, I have two daughters that live in Georgia, and they go to a Baptist church, and I have a daughter that lives in Richmond, and she her husband and family, they go to a Baptist church. My mother was raised Baptist. My father was Episcopal, from Jamaica. And probably they were the persons who for a while, you know, cause this church in England and they were a colony. His father, I don't know when the transfer came, but the father was first in the Baptist church. But

anyway, religion, and I thought a lot about religion. I started really thinking about religion seriously maybe as a late teenager. And doing, there was a lot of things I didn't understand, and I was very inquiring and about. That's why I was glad to take religion in Seton Hall. Because I figured I was going to learn something. Because I'd been through catechism and, you know, that whole gambit, you know. And when you asked the sister something, their pat answer, the sisters and the priest, this is a mystery we do not truly understand. What that meant was, don't ask that question. [Laughter] And in the beginning, most of the answers was in Latin, you know, you learned by rote what the response was in Latin. As a youngster, you had no idea what the words meant, unless you like you were an alter boy. I had two brothers that were alter boys, you know. But as I was saying, that was a missionary church, but one thing about it, it was someplace you went after school, and you had your catechism. It had plays. I used to like to be in the plays. And the sisters generally were nice. I mean, we didn't go through some of these things, you talk about when you see old pictures of Catholic nuns and stuff like that, pulling the kids noses and grabbing them by the ears, and boxing them on the, you know, ears, and things like that. They weren't mean. But then again, maybe that was not the tactic in the missionary church. You know.

And they used to have outings, and take the kids to, what was it, Coney Island. And Palisades Park. And it was really nice. And then you had a social life with all the kids that were at the catechism. I think it was compared to the protestant churches, the youth organizations that used to be so popular. You know, what they called BYUP. That was sort of like a common thing. I also, I always went to church. And I liked going to church, you know. Now, when I came out of training, as far as my activities in the church, of course, when I came out of training, I was about twenty-five, I said, well, I guess I'm going to go, I think I'll go to church and see what kind of an organization I can join in. I had very negative experience. It was a father, a priest, Father Lennihan. I can't remember his first name right off hand. But anyway, he was later made a Monsignor. But he was also a police chaplain for years. This big, tall, robust Irish. And I think his experiences in Ireland had made him what I would call extremely bitter, paranoid individual. Gruffy, grouchy, and like I think he had been at St. Patrick's. And I think they sent him up to Queen of Angels. Because we had a very, very nice pastor, Father Ahern and a Father Price. You know. And they sent Father Lennihan up there. Gruff, was nothing, what would you call it,

can't think of the word I want. But there was no kindness, there no humanness, there was no warmth. And his best conversation was how terrible the Englishman were and how awful they treated the Irish. And blessed are the Englishmen, and sometimes he'd even go on diatribes at that during the homily, you know, of the church service, and like that. And he was a very, very bitter man. You know. And I ran into him when I went up for that state after, you know, I would like to join one of these organizations. And I'd like to join these societies or the flower guild, you know, help out with the youth groups and something. And the way he responded to me, you know, he said something to the effect that where you've been up to this point. Or something. And I was taken aback by it because I said, I know, I mean, I know he's nasty, but, you know, who needs this. And I might have caught him on a bad day or what. So I just told him I'd been away at school, and I thought maybe I'd come up, and join like that. Well, see me some other time. And that was the end of that. You know. I never joined any organization in the church. But he eventually died. But I never joined, then, any other organization. I always went to church, always supported the church, but never actively joined until my children started school, and they were in Catholic school. And that was strictly volunteer and like that. And then I became very active because I was active in the PTA. I was always during their years of school in one capacity or the other. An officer in the PTA or on the PTA board. I was on the board of the church. I had a Girl Scout Troup for ten years. And I was quite active in the church while, you know, my children were going there. And cause my mother always went, you know, to church.

And after my children came out of school, I kind of cut down somewhat going to church. You know. And not going to church. I cut down on being as involved because I was, number one, I was spread too far because I was also active in St. Vincent's Academy at the same time when my oldest girl was going there. And then when the kids went down to the Science High Parochial High School, not parochial, public high school. My youngest two children, I was also very active in the same way with their school. So I was active in three places at the same time. And I was kind of glad when I could, you know, start to dropping things a little bit by little bit. But the church now is black, of course. Played a big part when we had the riots in 67. They're in a building on Irving Turner Blvd. because the original church burnt down, and they had temporary headquarters at St. Bridget's Church, which was on Plain Street. And then St. Bridget's burnt

down. So then that's how they got up to Irving Turner Blvd. They renovated that church. That parish moved out and they renovated that church, and Queen of Angels has been there ever since. I don't know the year, but fairly recently. Let's say, I must have been about in, close to thirty when they were up there. I'm sixty-eight now, so. [voice too low to hear] And that's where I am.

Queen of Angels Church has always been influential in the city insofar as it was the first and foremost black Catholic church in the city. You can call it that, quote, quote, quote, unquote. And like I said they was influential in the, during the riots, and they developed race understanding afterwards. And anything that was diocesan wide, they was represented there as, you know, the black church. Right. So it, you know, and still, it still is. That's what new community developed from Queen of Angels. Cause getting together after the riots, and well Father Linder's there now, but it was Father Cummerford who even like before the riots had started to trying to get some dialogue going to clean up the projects and to get blacks activated to do for themselves and start a change from the powers that be. And the word I'm looking for is organizing. Organizing them to both put pressure on the powers on that be and trying to get them to develop some kind of organizational skills so that they can build up something that they themselves could become a force. And it was, you know, and it was going on pretty well too. Because they used to have meetings, and they started the youth activities, and they concentrated on Stella Wright projects, you know. And then, of course, there was the riots. And then they started a little health clinic up there. And there was a lot of little disjointed things that was kind of pulled, you know, trying to pull together. And then they had this thrift shop. Some people from Orange and like that. A church in Orange.

And then they started this business about a church adopting churches. You know, suburban churches adopting an inner city church and trying to work, you know, with them. I like the former thing that originally started out because to me it was time to teach them how to organize, how the system works, how to help themselves, how to put pressure downtown, and in other words, training. I don't like, although sometimes it helps and sometimes it is necessary, I don't like this paternalistic thing of we have to help them. You know. That's one thing that I didn't really like about suburban church people coming in to help the church people, the Catholic church people in the inner city. I did never really, you know. But I realized that it was something that

was needed, and it was something that was necessary. And sometimes you accept the ends even if you don't like the means. And I think that's how I reconciled myself to it.

I would have liked to have seen cooperation insofar that the people that were capable of doing certain things giving the opportunity to them. Black or white. But it always was, it was always that thing wherein white people had to help you to do something. You know. As if that you didn't have the ideas or the mind to think, you know, about it. Like just like, look how, out of that, anyway, out of that, and Father Linder was at our church, and then, you know, things came on. Quest was developed which still exists which I thought was a very good program for the youth, and Quest is still existing. It was that Clifton Carter who's now dead was the young man that worked very, very diligently with Quest. And I think of the people that I have met that have come through, I think I admire Cliff a great deal. He was also one of the Freedom Riders. His wife is now, I think, the executive director of Quest. He died maybe seven years ago, something like that.

Q: And Quest is a young program?

Powell: Yeah, it's a youth program sponsored by the diocese. And even at that, these last several years there have been attempts to, not so much eliminate quest, but move it, move it out of the city. And they were going to try, they were going to headquarter it in Carney or something like that. And I never did find out the logistics or logical thinking involved in that. But anyway, these things happen. You know, some things don't seem logical at all, but they happen. But anyway, it probably was because of that that new community originally got started. You know, the attention was on the city and stuff like, and yeah, like that. And that's a long story. But to the extent that you can see in new communities and large builders in the city. And there's a lot of power and there's a lot of political power there. And another thing that, and it's that same thing, there's this, and even though Negroes, and I use that word Negro, that comes up because of my age, but even though blacks, it was a tremendous thing they're building for better housing. I like the way they just move from stage to stage. Better housing social service, employment was provided. Jobs.

Q: Training.

Powell: Employment training was provided. Now I see they're gonna start the automotive training program, and all of that. I admire that. I think that was something, and I believe that was something that only they could have done. Because there are so many things to surmount, politically, economically, and business wise. And these things don't come just because you know.

Q: Mrs. Powell, how much have you participated in political activities in Newark?

Powell: Well, as far as political activities, I have always been interested in politics, but I haven't really been out there. You know, with the hoopla of going to meetings. At one time, I attended the, regularly, the precinct meetings. And that would be like back in the sixties. But I never, you know, I didn't never run, ran for office or anything like that. Now I have always been interested in it. I've read. I have always voted in every election, primary, locally or presidential elections since I was twenty-one.

My husband has been politically active in that he just likes that scene. And, you know, he's been a ward leader for almost twenty years. But I never really took to, you know, the political scene as such.

Q: Have you participated in any community activities or organizations?

Powell: Yes. I, you know, I belong to the Y, and the neighborhood house. I was a Girl Scout leader. I'm still a member, but I was an active leader in the Girl Scouts for ten years. I belong to the NAACP. And I do attend community functions. But I'm not an officer or anything like that.

Q: Aside from being a consumer of regular goods and services, in what ways did you participate in the economic life of the community? By that, did you ever own or operate your own business?

Powell: No.

Q: Did you purchase stock in any black owned businesses or enterprise?

Powell: Well, I opened up a bank, in what was supposed to have been the first black bank here in Newark, black owned bank. It probably survived about two years, and then that, you know, it was defunct. So I never invested in anything else. Now I belong to the organization of Negro educators, which was an organization formed, again, back in the sixties. The purpose is, the purpose of it really was to try to improve the. Number one, the lot of black students, and to improve the status of the black teachers and black employees of the Newark Board of Education. Because at that time, number one, you didn't have blacks more or less down inside the Board of Education. And then as far as the teachers were concerned, historically those teachers, the few, the very few that they had, the sprinkling, were always substitute teachers or teachers with temporary status. They were never made permanent. And it was always some reason. They didn't pass the test, or they didn't have the experience, or something. And we're going, even going back as far as when teachers here were actually were educated in what they called the two year normal school. They had two years of college. And they had a normal school here. And if a black teacher came up from the south and they had been to four years of college, they still weren't hired as permanent teachers. And that's one of the things that blacks that lived in Newark always talk about. Even if you came up from the south and you had an education, the best job that you could get would be running an elevator downtown in Kresges or Bambergers department store. Most of those women that ran those elevators down there were college educated women, and then they had to be fair skinned. What we would call light skin or whatever. But the employment situation was such that blacks were not equally employed, and it didn't matter about your education.

Now the Urban League was another organization that. I think I was a card carrying member for a while. But they found jobs, such as they could, for blacks. And in fact, a lot of the blacks that had some education, like, they would work for either the Urban League, the newspapers, the black newspapers. I think we had the Herald, and we had the Guardian, and we had the New Jersey Afro-American. Or they worked for the branch of the NAACP. But it wasn't like you was going downtown and getting yourself a job as a salesperson or working for the

government or anything like that. That didn't until in the 50s, the early 50s.

Q: Talking about black newspapers, how did you get information on the news and events of the community? Did you read a black newspaper?

Powell: Most people bought a black newspaper if they were gonna get a newspaper. They bought a black newspaper. But they also bought the white newspaper. They also bought the white news. So I got most of my information from, you know, one or the other. In fact, when we were kids, we sold papers. That was one of the, one the things, our first little jobs. You know how you had little jobs. We had a paper route and sort of like passed down from, you know, my older brothers and sisters and to my sister and I. And I think I sold newspapers until I was about twelve years old.

Q: And what was the name of the newspaper?

Powell: Oh we had the Journal American. You had the Ledger. You had the Star Eagle. You had the Sunday Call. You had the Daily Mirror. You had the Daily News. I mentioned Journal American? There might have been one other or something. But the black papers we had were as far as I can recall was, the main one was the New Jersey Afro-American and the Guardian. You had the Amsterdam News which was outletted here to. I think that was out of New York, but, you know, they sold that here. And you had the Herald. And the Guardian.

Q: Which black orientated radio station would one listen to?

Powell: You know, I can't remember. I know they had it. I can't remember. Now there was the station WHBI that had the gospel programs. And they also started running a church program. When I say church program, the ministers would have church service over the radio.

Q: It was recorded live?

Powell: Yes. Recorded live over the radio. WHBI. That was on Shipman Street, I think that they had an outlet there. But that's the only one that I really know of.

Q: During that time what was the relationship between black Newark and other black communities in New Jersey? For instance, maybe Newark compared to Montclair or East Orange or other neighborhoods, other communities?

Powell: Well, Newark was, Newark was always, let's say Newark was a place of entry. If you come from someplace else, you're gonna stop in Newark first and see if you can get a place to stay or get a job. Because Newark was a manufacturing center. And in fact, Jersey itself was a place that people used to always say if there's no work in Jersey, there's no work anywhere. So people.

END SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO; BEGIN SIDE ONE, TAPE THREE

Powell: Usually came up from the south, they would come up to Newark like first. Cause there was like jobs in Newark. Jersey City was within a bus hop. And then too, then they may have relatives here, and they're living with relatives until they could find a place of their own. Now, in East Orange and Orange, Montclair, you didn't have a lot of Negroes living there. They didn't start to really moving out into East Orange until like after the war. Then you had your movement out of the, houses being built out and white people moving out of the houses that are within the city. Taking those houses cause they still had, there was discrimination as far as you buying a house. So usually when those settlements were built up after the war, even though they had passed that fair housing and all that GI Bill and all of that business, they still maintained that segregation. You couldn't, there would always be something wrong with the job or what your background was that you couldn't get a house out in those developments. And, the other thing that you had a problem with, you had a problem with getting a loan or mortgage from the bank to do it. So it was systematically set up that you weren't going out there, and I don't care if you did have the money to go out there at that time. Now, we're talking about the late 40s and the 50s. We're talking about the 40s and the 50s now.

So as white people began to move out of areas, black people began to move into areas. And you might say that they called themselves moving up. You know. But very often it would be that they could have moved up higher, they could have moved out further, but because of discrimination, they were restricted actually to certain areas. Now, even before that, Montclair, the blacks that lived in Montclair for the most part, these were blacks that were living in Montclair. They were domestic workers. And very often they lived in the house with the people that they worked for. West Orange, South Orange, and like that, they had, you know, that was the domestic scene. The butlers and the cooks and the domestic workers, the housekeepers and like that. Some of them lived with people that were very good, just like everything else, and some of them were not so good. But at least if you worked, if you didn't have a lot of children or anything like that, and let's say you worked in domestic service and you worked for a decent family, some people could save money. Because they, you know, they got their food, they got their lodging, and like that, and if they were thrifty, they could save money and they did, you know, save money. And some of those people were the first people that were able to buy a home, the homes in Montclair. You know. Now they didn't live right smack back in with the white people, but at least they had a little, they got their foot in the door. You know. Tram Station was a little different too. Now, you had the trolley cars like back in the 40s. You had the trolley cars or the bus that ran up to Montclair. And Montclair's a good little way. Because people didn't have cars, you know. But they had a Y up there and some of the people, a few that had any transportation might have gone to the Y up there or maybe some of them came down for the Y here. When I say Y, I mean it was a black Y. They called it, and oddly enough to distinguish between the Y, the black Y in Newark and the black Y in Montclair, they called that the Y in Montclair the High Y. I don't know what that high was. But anyway, they called it the High Y.

And there was, there was a little division socially. And it was the people in Montclair and the people in Newark, you know. They, it was almost as if they felt that they, since it's Montclair was like a suburban community, they felt as though that they were suburbanites, and Newark was, you know, they were city dwellers. Right. Although when you think of it, they were domestics, and the people that lived in Newark that were doing domestic work were still domestics, and they were, except that maybe they worked in, they were domestics in Newark, in South Orange, and

East Orange. But there was a little division. I never researched to say, you know, just why and how things got that way, but, you know, that's just a social thing that was a fact. You know.

Q: Mrs. Powell, what do you remember about such public servants as police, fire fighters, social workers, etc. in Newark?

Powell: You know, it's kind of hard. Unless you kind of like break that down into categories as to times. So I'll say when I was a little girl. When I was a little girl around six, let's say from six, cause that's about as far back as I can remember personally as far as that type of timing is concerned. We didn't have black policemen. We just had white policemen and mostly they were Irish. And the police relationships with the community, and when I say the community, I talk about the black community. You know, it wasn't that cool because, you know, I mean we didn't have any black policemen and they used to call them. You don't hear that name any more. Flat foots, they used to call policemen.

Q: Policemen?

Powell: Yeah, flat foots. Rude in many instances. Looked down on the people, you know, in the neighborhoods. Not very much compassion except for their own. This is 1936, 37. This was sort of like after Prohibition. And the police were more or less like with the gangsters and things like that. I mean it wasn't, of course, in school, you know, had the same thing, you know, that we have in schools now. The policemen are your best friends, you know, and always go to a policeman if you're in trouble and like that. Firemen were different now. The firemen used to come to the school, the grammar school. We used to have fireman day and all that, fire prevention week, and all that. We had that. And we, personally, we only lived about a block from the fire house when I was growing up. We only lived about a block or two from the emergency squad. So on a personal level as children to the police, children to the firemen, it was good relationship. Because we used to go down there all the time, and they used to show us the trucks and put us on trucks and it didn't make any difference that we were black. And we used to go to the emergency squad

and we asked them if him if he wanted us to go to the store and get him a soda or go, you know, like that. They would let us look around in there and show us their axes and equipment and things like that. So they had, you know, on that level, the relationship was a good relationship.

Now, police, the police and fire department didn't start hiring blacks until about 1954. About 1954. Prior to that, I can remember there was a special policeman. I can't remember his name. But I knew three men that were special policemen that I saw, and they was usually in the movies. You know, to make sure that you didn't sneak in the movies. And make sure that you didn't go downstairs cause you wasn't supposed to sit downstairs, you were supposed to sit up in the balcony. You know, and make sure that you behaved in the movies like that. But I didn't, you know, I didn't see black policemen and firemen until in the 50s. You know, and that was quite a while after the Second World War.

Q: Did you happen to have the opportunity to meet or hear any outstanding blacks in Newark?

Powell: Well, let's see. Well, no. Now I, other than the mayor, and the first black mayor, Kenneth Gibson. He was in high school the time I was in high school. Although we went to different high schools. I was in high school with his brother. When Ron Caranga, the black activist came into town, I met him, saw him. Saw Dr. Martin Luther King. Met Harold Ashby who was the first black superintendent of schools. Met [?] who, as a matter of fact that was late because he was, he had his office on High Street, and this was like, I guess maybe in the late 50s, early 60s. Because I was doing public health work at the time. Then we had this man Harold Letts who was very instrumental in the Urban League. I can remember, you know, his name stands out as one of the people of the time. And a few of the doctors from the early, you know, doctors like Dr. Carr who was on High Street, and Dr. Darden who was on Kinney Street. And then you had a Dr., oh I forget his name. I can see him face, but I can't remember the name. But he was on Court Street. Then you had some dentists. Dr. Colestrum, who started out his office on Court Street. And there was another doctor which was one of the first doctors. His name eludes me now. But the last place he had was on the corner of Bamber Place and Plain Street. Dr., oh I can't think of his name. But it was a West Indian name. Went to our church too. Can't think of it though. Cause

he was one of the oldest dentists that had been here. When I say oldest, I mean, actually the earliest of the dentists, the black dentists. When I think of his name, I'll mention it.

Q: What do you remember about such personalities as William Ashby?

Powell: William Ashby. I think, he was an activist insofar as we had activists at that time. Now that would be like in the, I guess that would be like in the 30s and 40s. But my mother knew of him. And he also was associated with the Urban League and the NAACP. My mother has told me about him. But I didn't know him directly.

Q: Are you familiar with Meyer Ellingstein?

Powell: Yeah. Mayor Ellingstein, they used to call him. Now maybe it was Mayor Meyer Ellingstein. Because he was the mayor.

Q: Newark's first Jewish mayor.

Powell: Oh he was. Okay. Mayor Ellingstein. Yes. But I think Mayor Ellingstein was before I was old enough to vote. I'm not sure. Cause I think when I first started voting, I think it was, not Carley, Moran. I think it was a man named Moran. And then came Carley. But Ellingstein I'm sure was before that. Although he may have run again and was on the City Council. But I know of that name and I can see the face. You know. But I remember Mayor Ellingstein. And I'm sure that it was at that time a lot of Jewish people were able to do a lot of things that they weren't able to do before through Mayor Ellingstein.

Q: How about Prosper Brewer?

Powell: Heard of Prosper Brewer. I didn't know of Prosper Brewer. The people that lived here in the Central Ward, you know, you ask any of them who actually grew up here, they all knew

Prosper Brewer. He was a political figure. You know. Like in the ward politics type of thing. You know. So, but I heard of Prosper Brewer.

Q: Irving Turner?

Powell: Yes. Yes. I was voting at the time that Irving Turner came on the scene. And he had a house over there on High Street. On the corner of High and I think that street is College Place. High Street is now Irving Turner Blvd. No. High Street is now Martin Luther King Blvd. On the corner of Martin Luther King and College Place. And it just so happens that I visited in that house to see some newborn babies. I was doing public health work at the time. And that's when I first met him face to face. He was councilman. But I had never met him face to face. You know, just spoken to. But I remember Irving Turner very well.

Q: Do you remember someone being called the Mayor of Springfield Avenue?

Powell: No.

Q: What do you remember regarding black institutions like we said before, black hospitals, but what about black hotels or banks?

Powell: Well, that one bank was the, that I mentioned previously was the first black bank that I knew of or heard of. Black people usually put their money in Howard Savings Bank. I think I mentioned that earlier too. Or they put their money in the post office. They had a, you could bank in the post office. You know. But I don't know of any other banks. What was that other?

Q: Black hotels?

Powell: Yeah, well we, yeah, they had some black hotels. Small hotels. Like say it'd be like a three family, three story type of thing that's broken up into. There's a place on West Market

Street. Can't remember what that was, what the name of it was. There was the, now this is like the 40s, the 50s. The Alpine House opened up on Washington Street. And there was another place on Washington Street, and I can't remember that name. But there was the Coleman Hotel was the first actual large size building that, you know, when you look at it, you said, oh that's a hotel. I mean, it's not big like the hotels downtown. But you say, oh, that's a hotel. You know. And it was a big thing when that happened because it was a group of brothers, the Coleman brothers. And they opened up the Coleman Hotel. And that was really something. That was in the, I think that was in the early 50s. And that was really something, you know, because everybody's talking about the Coleman Hotel. And the next thing that came along was the, Father Devine opened up a hotel. Irving Turner Blvd. which was then High Street and Clinton Avenue. And that was, now that was really one of the highlights in the newspapers, white and black. Because supposedly he came into town while knowing that, you know, banks didn't lend you money, and there was a lot of hassle with it. And he really didn't have to depend on bank money because he paid cash for it. I think he paid something like three million dollars. You know. Cash for it. I mean, don't quote the figure, but it was, well three million dollars at that time was big enough that even if you make a mistake on that figure, it's a lot of money.

Q: About what time was the time?

Powell: This was like, this was, this had to be in the early 50s or late 40s that he bought that hotel. It used to be called, I think it used to be called the Revere. And teachers lived in there and things like that. It was a nice hotel when they opened it up. But Father Devine bought that and turned it into, you know, I'd say a peace mission cause that's what they used to call it. But it was a hotel and they had churches in there and restaurants and like that. It was quite successful. Now, of course, they don't have it, you know, things like that at that time.

Q: What can you tell us about the Newark Eagles?

Powell: You know I knew that the Newark Eagles played, but we didn't go. When I say we, my

family didn't go to the ball games. Because number one, you know, my mother was a single mother. My father had died like in 1938. Which meant that at that time, I mean, your mother. If you had children, and there were six of us, she couldn't be going to no baseball games. Right? But as I grew older, before they really stopped, just when I got old enough to go to a baseball game and let's say pay my way, it was just about the time that they stopped playing. But it was a big thing. And the people, the men, I heard the men talking about. I heard the women talking about it. And it was a thing that those who liked ball and those who could afford the ticket, that's where they went. That was a big thing, you know, to go to the game. That was a big thing.

Q: Regarding public education in Newark, how well academically did black students seem to perform and how were they treated by white teachers and students?

Powell: We always say, those of us who went to school, after being grown and looking back, we always said, if you went to school, since we weren't the predominant race here, most of the people were white. If you went to school and you just sat there and you wanted to learn, you could learn. Because it was more difficult for the teachers not to teach you because you were a minority in the group. So if you did what was required of you. Now, may have been smart, and I'm not saying you were going to be the valedictorian. But what you had in your head, they couldn't take away from you. So you learned. If you wanted to learn and you were really, really interested. But it wasn't that they, the white teachers, want to reach out for you. You know. But now, if you didn't want to learn, they could ignore you. You know. But they did that, they did that as far as white kids were concerned too. You know. They did that as far as white kids were concerned too. But I just make that point insofar as if you're sitting in a classroom and the teacher is teaching, and you have a book. You know, and you had a book. You had a book. And you're a pretty bright kid, or a kid who wants to learn, or a kid that knows, well, look, I gotta go to school and, you know, like that, you would learn in spite of the fact that whether the teacher thought you were inferior or thought you couldn't do this. Now, when it comes to picking people for plays, now comes the difference because then they could make a selection. You know. Then they could make a selection. But you still had people that if you were good, you know, whether it be in

extracurricular activities or whatever, and they wanted the best or they wanted to show themselves up, you know, that you could be picked. But, I mean, you just couldn't count on it. And you had some teachers that as soon as kids acted up or something like that, there was this thing of they were [?], you know, they were uptight on this thing about you couldn't learn and like that. And so many black kids unfortunately ended up in Montgomery Street School or Alliah or some of those special schools that they had for students that supposedly couldn't learn. And sometimes these students were no more than just disruptive students. They weren't, you know, but you know that's where they put them.

Then too a thing that stood out was that students coming from the south, I don't care what state you came from or like that, they always put them back. And I never did figure out how they determined that. But supposedly they didn't have the academic, you know, requirements or something. But it's very rarely, like, let's say in the 20s or 30s or 40s that if you came from the south, that you were gonna be put back. If you was like supposed to be in the second grade, they'd enter you in the first grade. And a lot of times they would tell you that, oh we'll see how they do here. And if they do all right, then we'll put them up, but it rarely that it happened that they would put you up. Because usually like it was an unusual that a person would be fifteen years old and just coming out grammar school. You didn't and it was a hindrance because actually you didn't have to go to school until you were seven years old according to the law. So let's say if a family, black or white, kept their kids out until they were seven years old, they were usually going to be like a year behind anyway, you know. But there was a lot of prejudice in the handling of students. There was prejudice as far as meeting our marks.

Q: How about the relationship of students with students?

Powell: Students with students. The relationship with students with students. I didn't think that was that bad because there weren't a lot of fights or anything like that. Because if you all went to the same school, the schools were usually built on a neighborhood basis. So usually the kids that lived in the same neighborhood going to the same school anyway. Black and white. And like I say there wasn't, when I was a kid, there wasn't an overwhelming number of black kids. You know.

And if they had any schools that were overwhelmingly black, it might have been like Monmouth or one of the schools in the Central Ward. But now I went to Morton which was in the Central Ward, and we were like half and half. We were like half and half, you know. And over at Burnett Street School maybe was like seventy percent or eighty percent white and twenty percent, you know, black. And then when you get further back over into the North Ward then you would have more white. If you get way back over in the Wickwake section, you had more whites. Or over in the West Ward, you know, it was just a splatter. Up until like I said, after the war in the 50s, then you started to getting the exodus, and then that's when you seen the turnover. But it was more or less sectional. People from, let's say Barringer High School, they would fight, and when you got the fights would be gang fights, and usually they were centered around the intramural sports. When they would, they would have track meets and that's when you.

END SIDE ONE, TAPE THREE; BEGIN SIDE TWO, TAPE THREE

Powell: Between schools and fights between neighborhoods. Because if you didn't belong in a certain area, and that's another thing when I was a child. Because my brother was older than I was, my brothers were, and I, so at that time kids didn't move from neighborhood to neighborhood. You more or less, and particularly if you were a girl, you stayed around in your neighborhood because the parents didn't allow you to go, you know, roaming from place to place. You had to stay within a certain radius of your house. And even after school, if you had any activities, those activities were in the school, or maybe your mother would let you go to the playground after school. And playgrounds were supervised. You know, and they were always open, you know, after school. But, I tell you, if you lived in a certain ward, you had no business in another ward, they thought. And with you, they didn't have any business in your ward. And then that's when you would have conflicts. You would have conflicts. But in school itself you really didn't have that, you know, that type of thing. Because even when there were gangs, the gangs didn't carry that over like nowadays. Gangs didn't carry that over into school. You took care of that business after school or, you know, some place like that or something like that. But, no, not there. Not at school.

Q: What black teachers do you recall?

Powell: Well, I recall way back a black teacher named Ms. Mulford. I think Miss Mulford was at Cole Street School, and then Morton. There was a shop teacher at Morton Street School. His name slips me now. I'll think of it. And then in high school I had a Mr. Seymour who was a chemistry teacher assistant. There were so few. It's hard to. There were no black teachers at Burnett Street School when I went to Burnett Street School. And the ones I first met was when I was in fifth grade and I went to Morton Street School. And then there was Miss Bohanon was a guidance counselor and teacher over at junior high school. And then, of course, in high school I had Mr. Seymour, who was very, very good. I had a friend who, you know, was a friend of our family. Name was Dorothy Macrae. And she married and her last name was Coulson, Miss Coulson, that started teaching up in Eighteenth Avenue School. That would have been, let's see, about 1948, 47, something like that. There were very few.

Q: Regarding the seamy side of black Newark life, do you recall any black gangsters or activities that were considered seamy? Or what places or locations?

Powell: Well, I have to tell you I could tell you stories about that. I don't, kids more or less unless somebody came and shot somebody right in front of your or something like that. I mean these are not things that kids were, you know, really privy to. But Newark did have an underside. Newark was like any other city, and it was affected by the Roaring Twenties as they called it, and the Depression and the poverty and the lack of jobs and all, just like any other city. And they did have speakeasies. They did have numbers, you know, they played the numbers. You had some black bankers, that's what they're called, that's a numbers term. The guy that has, the guy that banks it. Right. And numbers runners. And they had the Kinney Club which was on Augusta Street and Arlington Street, which was well-known. I think Fran Kukla mentions prominently the Kinney Club in her book on Newark. The writer and reporter. Which was like an after hours thing. You'd go upstairs to have entertainment. I remember peeking in that door. The front part of the door because the door was like sort of a corner. And when the kids, we used to, when we passed

there, we always would look in there to see what was, you know, what went on in there. And it had a long bar, and then you could see the men sitting at the bar. That's why I never understood why they said that, you know, people came there and went upstairs. You know. Because I never seen anything other than the first floor. But there was an upstairs, and they had tables and they had entertainment upstairs, you know, and like when the white men used to come up from that burlesque show I told you about, a lot of times they would leave the burlesque show and go up there to the Kinney Club for whatever. And but there was, you know, there was a crime element. Because, and, of course, with all of this stuff, just like everything else with the crime element, you had to pay to run these places. You know, there was payoff the same way it is up here. You know, as it is today. You don't run rackets without making your payoffs so that your businesses will stay open. You know. But I'm sure that Newark was, in fact, Newark is mentioned in a lot of movies. The older movies. And like that Newark is always mentioned in the gangster pictures. You know, going over to Newark. Well, so and so, well pick him up over at Newark, or take him over to Newark. Or something like that. But Newark was just like any other, maybe on a smaller scale because it's a smaller town, but it was like New York and Chicago and like that. There have been gangsters that killed here. And down in the Passaic River was a very nice place for dumping bodies. And, of course, we had the dumps down below South Street, down back in that way, down by the railroad tracks. I don't know the exact location, but I remember when we were kids, we used to sell empty bottles and we used to bale newspaper, and that would be one of the Saturday morning rituals, baling the newspaper that you collected during the week and the news and the cardboard. And we had a long wagon. It was like a heavy door and we had iron wheels on it. You know, we had found some iron wheels, and we made that wagon and to take, you know, to take and transport the paper. And we used to go from the home, and we used to walk down to the dumps. And that was, you know, that was a lot of fun cause then the money. You used to get a couple of kids to go with you to help you, and then you'd have enough money, and everybody have enough money to go the movies on Sunday and buy a hot dog and some candy or something like that. Soda. I liked that. But they used to find bodies down the Passaic River and down on the dumps and stuff like that. In fact, who was that gangster who was killed in Newark? Down on East Park Place. I think it was Dutch Schultz. Either Dutch Schultz or Dillinger. One

of them right here. In fact, the, when he was killed and the ambulance and police cars and stuff went screaming up Raymond Blvd., and my mother happened to, somebody was at the house, my mother happened to say, oh it must be somebody big. You know. And, you know, it was a gangster. But they did all those things. Everything they did in New York, they did here. But now, the black people were not the people in control. The control was mainly by, you know, the Italians, actually Italian and Jewish. You know, the number rackets and things like that. The bulk of it. So that's that, and, you know.

Q: Concerning musicians, what kind of music did one hear in black Newark? And do you remember listening to or seeing any musicians perform?

Powell: Um, again, I would have to say from what, you know, my mother and older people talked about. They did have a place, a vaudeville place, that blacks used to go to. A theater they called the Orpheum which was here back in, you know, in those days. They did have like amateur nights and contests at the Savvoy Theater which I recall. The black theater cause it was in a black neighborhood. The Savvoy and the Essex and the Court Theater. And sometimes they'd have amateur night and people would, you know, go to see the amateurs at certain times. As far as, but they did have a nightlife and singers. I think I heard Al Hibler, either my late teens or early twenties. It would have to be my early twenties because I didn't frequent those places that, you know. You couldn't go to those places until you got to twenty-one. I think I heard Al Hibler, Arthur Prisox, little Jimmie Scott. Who was that? There was a comedian. I don't know whether they called him Slappy White or something like that, you know.

I wasn't, I really wasn't, personally, I wasn't one for going out much, you know, until much later to clubs and that type of thing. I, and even at the Adams Theater, that's where they had the big bands that came. It was on Branford Place. The big bands came to, like they came to the Paramount and the Branford Theater sometimes. But where they came, they came to the Adams Theater. Like somebody like Frank Sinatra or Stan Kenton, Stan Getz. But I never liked the big bands, the big band music. And even like Nat King Cole, you know, he would come down there or was there. Because that's where they would come to the Adams Theater, and then if you had

one of those big bands or something like that, then the whites would have to come down there too, you know, in order to see this. Cause they would, you know, they' would appear there. But I never liked big band music. There was too much loudness. Too much music. And I liked more subtle kind of things, personally. So I didn't see many, I didn't seen many of those, I didn't see many of those bands. I knew they were there, but I didn't like going down there to see them. I lived the movies, but I didn't like band music.

Q: Mrs. Powell, what would you consider some of the most important events or developments that have occurred in Newark during your residency here?

Powell: Well, let me just narrow it down to the things that I can, the furthest I can go back to. Things that are in mind or things that I think about in going back to when I was a child. The first important thing that I can think of was about 1936 when President Roosevelt was coming into town. And my brother who was five years older than I begged my mother to let him take me and my sister who was about two years older than I down so we could see the president. And he came in, and my mother said okay, cause they had closed the schools for the day. He came into Penn Station. And, of course, my brother, he was one of those kinds that he always wanted to get up to the front of wherever it was going to, you know, a parade or whatever that he took us to, we always had to get up to the front. And he was dragging us along. And he had me by the hand. And I got to see the president, President Roosevelt. He had on his cape, which he always wore that cape. And I can see his face, he was in an open top, this open top car. And he had on that little grey hat that he always wore. That little sort of like cap, that we finally got up there, and we saw him. And it was also at the time that I said that I would never go to see any other dignitary ever again. And I haven't. Because I was very small for my age. I was crushed and squeezed, and I was desperately trying to hold on to my brother's hand. And he was dragging me in between all these people, and I was getting hit in the head with belt buckles from the, cause I only came up to more or less maybe to somebody's, you know, the grownups hips and like that. And they were crushing and like that. And I thought I was going to die or either smother to death. Right. But I did see the president, and I was maybe no more, I was no more than maybe fifteen feet away from

him. Finally, by the time my brother finished dragging us and scooting under legs and crawling, and etc. And even later on about nineteen, in the 60s, when President Kennedy came to Newark, I was a public health nurse. And I was walking down Broad Street and I noticed. I hadn't read the papers that he was coming. I noticed Broad Street had suddenly, was getting clear, and I was wondering what it was, and it was around noon time, and he was coming in, you know, he was coming in, and the police were clearing the street. And then I asked somebody, and they said, oh, President Kennedy is coming. You know, and the motorcade is on its way. And I just left the street. I had no intentions of seeing Kennedy, no desire to see Kennedy, and get in any kind of crowds again. And I went into the Woolworth's Five and Ten, which is out on Broad and Market Street. And I went in there and I had lunch, and I stayed there until the whole motorcade and all the commotion was gone. But I did, as I look back on it, I'm glad that I was able to see the president. Cause I can say that, you know, that I saw him and he stayed down there at Robert Treet Hotel on Park Place.

Okay, that impressed me. I can also remember another event as a child that I was very impressed by. And we used to have, and I don't know whether they have it still in other states, but I don't hear anything about it. A thing they called the Soap Box Derby. And the Soap Box Derby was a competition, it was a national competition for young boys. And you had to build a wagon. They give you the specifications, but you had to build a wagon, and you were in this derby, and it was like a race. Right. And my brother, again the same one that's five years older than I, he begged my mother to let him, you know, be in the Soap Box Derby. Cause, you know, they used to have the, what do you call them, the entrance applications in the comic books and other magazines, papers and like that. So, anyway, she had let him apply. And they sent him back all the paraphernalia and everything like that. And then everybody in the neighborhood was saying, oh Archie is going to be in the Soap Box Derby. Oh this was a real big thing. Right. And it just so happened that the trials were going to be held on Raymond Blvd. And I said previously, we lived on Academy Street at the time, and all we had to do was just get up on the roof and look over, you know, because there huge crowds, you know, that would come to see the Soap Box Derby. Because I don't think we had ever had, I don't think we had had it in Newark. But a friend of mine's mother who was a domestic worker, she worked in South Orange, for a family in South

Orange. She used to come to our house every Thursday on her day off. And she bought him the wheels. And then some other, a neighbor, contributed to getting him the wood. Because my father, you know, my father was sick. And then my mother, you know, got the other, you know, little things or whatever, couldn't have been much, little entrance fee that you had. And then everybody had to have, they were orange shirts and a white pants. You know, and we were so, one of the reasons we were so proud because you didn't see no little black face. You know, in any of them little wagons, you know. They were all white and we were so proud that, you know, our brother was there. And plus, when we could or what we could do, he let us help. You know, even if it was, like with me, I just like straightened nails, you know, like a nail went in crooked. You know, then I'd straighten this and like that. Because, you know, you had to build the wagon. But he didn't, he didn't win, and, in fact, he was one of the last finishers, but he was there. You know, and that's important even with, you know, I could tell stories of things with kids. It's not so important that you win. But you were good enough to be there. And that's the main thing. You know. And we were so proud. And he, you know, all the boys were given their helmets. And it had like, I remember the helmet was white and it had in the front of it was like American flag, you know, little decals or whatever you would call it, and it said Soap Box Derby, you know. And my mother bought him a new pair of white sneakers. And, oh, it was, and everybody in the neighborhood, of course, came out to see. You know. And I always remember that, and I'll remember that as long as I live. The fact that he was in the Soapbox Derby because that was supposed to be a big, you know, a big thing. And that it was run right there on Raymond Blvd. You know, it was right here in Newark. Okay.

And then other things. I don't know. I was, let's say, later on in life, I was very impressed when we got the first councilman, Irving Turner. I was moreso when, with, when we elected the first mayor, Ken Gibson. Just like I said, he was going in high school when I was in high school, and many of the people that were working his campaign, you know, the Gibson girls and things like that, we grew up together. You know. And it was a great accomplishment. I think everybody, all, you know, in the city, everybody was affected by that. Because that was a long, that was a long haul that was. You know.

I was glad with the results of the Organization of Negro Educators and their finally in a

short while, and I think really what it was the time was right. You know how they say everything in its time. And when it comes its time, there's no holding it back. When they finally made it so that black teachers would be hired and would be able to be given equal footing with whites. And the clamor for upgrading the education of the black students in Newark, which had fallen to such a terrible low since the time of the exodus of the white people after the war. Now the white families began to move and in the beginning. I would like to say this because this is my thinking. In the beginning, it wasn't half so much as those people were trying to get away from black people. Because they had lived with black people. As it was, it was the GI Bill and them being able to get better houses themselves, they began to move. And this is something I think that would have happened whoever, you know, it was. But I think the way it was played up in the news and like that, it was just as if they were running. You know, that they were running. I'm talking about the first start of it. And then business wise, people realized that they could get, they could get a lot more for their houses than they had paid for them. And it was good to sell at the time. Especially since they were going out. Cause a lot of people that went out, it was because of the GI Bill and like that that they were able to really even make that move themselves. Cause it's not like everybody who moved from Newark had some substantial money or anything like that. That was a struggle and a sacrifice for a lot of people who were leaving, you know, and went out there.

But I was glad to see that. Because things had gotten, things had gotten to sort of like a standstill for blacks here in Newark. Schools are going down and they didn't seem to know what to do about it. Or they didn't care. Or they didn't have the resources. I don't know. I mean, I couldn't say that right now. But things were really, really, you know, things were going down. You know. But anyway, that's a whole other story. But that's about it. You know.

Q: Do you remember anything concerning the riots?

Powell: Yup. I remember the riots quite well. I remember the day they started. I had been out and I came home, and then I was cooking in the kitchen, happened to look out, and I saw a man, a young boy, coming with a chair on top of his head. Well, a living chair, single chair, but he was walking along the streets, and he had it on his head. And I was at the window and my mother was

sitting in the kitchen. So I said, now, he must have, I know he can't be taking that to somebody for a gift. I said, well, maybe they didn't want to wait for the delivery people, and he just said, look, I'll just take it, you know, I'll just take it myself. You know. And I didn't think anything more about it. And then I noticed some, some activity, you know, more people walking up and down, or young people walking up and down the street. And then I got a call from my brother who had just come in. And he said that something is going on. He said, I think it's a riot or something. He said, the people are running up and down the street. And he said, do you see anything down there? And I said, no. Cause I was living on Quitman Street at the time. And then almost like boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, you know, everything just broke out. You know. And I remember that we were sort of like battened down for about a week. I had never in my life seen tanks and soldiers with guns drawn. I'd never been in a situation like that in my life. I'm just two blocks from the projects. I could see the gun fire, that constant gun fire from the projects. I could hear from Springfield Avenue. I had a girlfriend who was in the hospital, up at Presbyterian Hospital, that I went out to see on that Saturday, and there was really an awesome, eerie feeling to walk.

END SIDE TWO, TAPE THREE; BEGIN SIDE ONE, TAPE FOUR

Powell: So this was an entirely new thing for me having never been in the Army or anything like that. And most of those guardsmen and like that, they were very young boys. Looked like that was their first assignment. And some of the were seasoned. It was a really a bad time because there were a lot of things that we done by both the guardsmen and the police that were absolutely unnecessary. A lot of people got killed needlessly. It was sort of a brutish scene in some respects. But finally the, you know, order was restored and it was over. And there are many grievances that they had at that time that are still not resolved here in 1998. But that was an era and it's over.

Q: Mrs. Powell, do you recall Louise Scott? Did you know her personally?

Powell: I didn't know her personally. I had seen her. I know she opened up, she bought that

Krueger mansion, and she opened up a beauty school for teaching girls beauty culture. She was a beautician before that, I know, before she opened that up. But she opened up that big place and it had been vacant and for a long time. I was, we always used to refer to that place as the castle because it was right up there on the corner of Court and High Street, and you never saw any activity, you never saw any motion, you never saw any windows up. And, you know, when kids pass a place like that, that's, you know, it always invoked a lot of imagination, etc., etc. So when she, when it was known that she was going to buy this place, that was a real, real big deal. But she bought it and it opened up, and they would have, after she kind of fixed it up, did her little renovations, she opened the school, and then they used to have like affairs their. Like maybe, at that time, they used to have teas and used to have like cocktail sips. You might even have an affair, a small type of affair, like maybe after a christening or a wedding reception, a small wedding reception of something like that. But I was just inside the building maybe once, possibly twice.

Q: What was the community's perception of Louise Scott?

Powell: Well, she was a respected business woman, and they looked up to her. And she was well liked by the community and respected by the community.

Q: Do you know anything about the area on High Street where the Krueger-Scott Mansion is located?

Powell: Yes. I knew it in growing up because I used to pass it every day and going to school. That is, let's say from the age of eight on. Because that was more or less in my neighborhood.

Q: Was it occupied at that time?

Powell: And I can't remember right off now whether it was occupied. But I think it was not occupied. Because that's why we would always wonder what was in there. You know. And want to see what was in there, you know. But it had a fence around it. So it's not like you could even

climb over the fence which we would do sometimes in some of those houses on High Street to see if you can get a peek. But they didn't, you know, the ones that didn't have dogs. Cause sometimes they had, you know, watchdogs. But I never got near other than just peek through the fence, just to peek through the fence. When I was a little girl, High Street goes from Clinton Avenue back to Bloomfield Avenue. I don't know much about way back Bloomfield Avenue. But let's say I knew High Street from James Street. No. I knew High Street from Orange Street back to Springfield Avenue when I, from the time, let's say that I started school at seven years old. Six years old. I think six years old, five years old, whenever you go to kindergarten first. But anyway, up to the fifth grade, and after that when I went to Morton Street School, I knew High Street well from Court Street back to Clinton Avenue because we would walk it. And High Street had very few, if any, black people living on it. Between the length, I would say the length of that street, up to maybe about nineteen forty, maybe 49 or 50. 50 would have been, I would have been ten years old. Up to I'll just say, I'll say 1950. The other end over there, the far end maybe like around Bloomfield Avenue, you would have Italians. And then as you moved over, you would have maybe a mix of Italians, Scotch, Irish. That would be like I say after you pass Warren Street and come back, coming over this way. There was a great big hotel that was on the corner of West Market Street and High Street. And a lot of the women who used to work down at the, worked the burlesque, or, you know, work in some of the taverns, or whatever, it was like a big, I guess it would be like you'd say that would be one of these big houses like you have like in New York where the showgirls and all that live. But they were white, not black. And then when you come back over toward Court Street, say from Court Street beyond down to Clinton Avenue, most of those people in there were Jewish. And they did have, some people did, you know, some of them did have like domestic workers or women that would come in and work in their houses because they had a lot of professional people like teachers, somebody husband's was a doctor, a lawyer, or owned a business, or had a store or something, and that's where they lived. And that was High Street. Because they had a Jewish home on High and, High and Kinney Street, on that corner, there was a big Jewish nursing home. And I think I read in one of the articles that Cummings wrote, that's the one that's the director of the library who runs now some series on Newark, I think I read in one of his columns that years ago, would probably be before my time, that that used to be

a hospital, a Jewish hospital or something like that, that Jewish doctors, you know, worked. You know, because, you know, there was a lot of prejudice, let's say before I was born, you know, against Jewish and Italian doctors. You know, as far as where they could go to school, where they could train. They weren't just taken in, you know. There were only certain places that they could go, you know, to train, and to practice, and to take their patients in in certain hospitals. But that was mostly all, that was mostly Jewish down to the end to Clinton Avenue. And now it wasn't again until after the war that people started to moving out, and I think Miss Ruffin, there's a woman named Miss Ruffin, she bought a house there on High Street, High near Court. And then there was the one made hats, Renee, she bought a house there next to Miss Ruffin's house. And then you had, I don't know whether it was before the seventies or after, but I think it was someplace around that area in the 60s or 70s, that you had Wiggins Funeral Parlor open up on High Street, between Court and Williams. And one of the Coleman brothers had bought a house on High Street, between Court and Williams. But now in the meantime, and the Bland, that lawyer Bland had a house on High Street near Williams Street, and like a brick building. You had Wilson's Furniture place there. Across from Arts High School. Because the Arts High School was right there between Court and Williams.

But then those big apartment houses they had, they started to cutting those houses up into, like you have a five, cause I was doing public health work at the time. You had five rooms, they'd cut those five rooms up into two rooms, and let's say two rooms and three rooms. You know, and they were starting to rent them out like that. The people that, the black people that were moving in, let's say after the war, you know, they were coming to Jersey too. You know, I mean soldiers that maybe had gotten out and they decided to leave the south. Or people that had come up here and been at Ft. Dix and they decided that they were going to, you know, stay in Jersey, and come into Newark. But anyway, it was during that time, the 50s, that the complexion of High Street began to change. They broke up the rooms and apartments into, let's say, two, what was a five room apartment was two and they broke it into two and three or some places they'd just make rooming houses out of it. And subsequently, the maintenance and the managements and all, it was an entirely different thing. You know, they didn't manage it, they didn't maintain it. When I first started to visit in there as a public health nurse, I mean, they had a superintendent, and he shined

the brass and he kept their windows clean. He swept the front. And it looked like any apartment house anyplace else you'd see. But once that complexion changed and they started splitting up those rooms, from then on it was downhill. And the people that, the first black people that moved in there, they were people that had good jobs, as what we would call good jobs. Well, they had to because they could pay their rent. And it got to the point where those people moved out. You know, those were like the first people. They were starting to move, those black people were starting to moving out because they just didn't, you know, they just didn't maintain. So when they got enough money, and, you know, they would start to moving out of their themselves. But, you know, I think that the way that deteriorated is the way housing deteriorates all over. And that was it.

Q: We're coming to the close of our interview and I'd like to ask two questions. How would you sum up your experience of living in Newark? And if you had your life to live over, would you live in Newark?

Powell: Well, I never lived anyplace else other than Newark. I was born and I was raised here. And I still live here. And I have no real desire to move at this particular time. I live now in High Park Gardens. It opened up in 1966, and to be very truthful with you, this is the first time I had ever had central heating, dishwasher, hot and cold running water, where I didn't have to worry about. It was there. Air conditioning, hard wood floors, cabinets in the kitchen, and it was brand new. It was an, well, I would say an experimental housing. Because it's cooperative housing, but it was cooperative differently in the strict sense of the word when you talk about cooperatives and condominiums. It was an experience to have moderate cooperative housing wherein for a minimum, and when I say minimum, I mean minimum down payment, then you would rent the apartment and you would, as long as you abided by the rules of the cooperative and the cooperative board, you know, you had that apartment was yours. And you could stay here as long as you wanted to, unless you sold it to somebody else with the cooperative okay. And they came in under the same conditions agreements as you did. Right. So for me now at my age, this is fine for me and my husband. Because my children have been raised. And that wasn't my

intention. When I first came here, because when I first came here our intention was that at least we would be able to afford something. It was comfortable, it was clear, it was new, it was within good commuting distance from my job, my husband's job. And if we stayed here long enough, we would either, number one, be able to save cause the rent or carrying charges as we call them were very reasonable, and we couldn't anything better. And if we stayed here, we would either be able to move and buy or eventually, or it was also one of those things that we could, we wouldn't be so far outpriced that we couldn't afford to send our kids to college. And we've been here. And my three children have finished college. They're out and it just doesn't seem. I'm not uncomfortable in Newark. I'm not uncomfortable here at all. In fact, I like it. And I don't have negative things to say about Newark. Or, you know, like I can't stand it. I wish I could get out of here. Or God, I can't even go out at nighttime. This doesn't bother me. This is not a priority. The things that bother me in life are not the fact that I'm living in Newark. There are other things that bother me in life, and there are other places and other circumstances and other social aspects of today's current circumstances that give me more grievances that actually, than living in Newark. You know. And I really don't. But that's not a pressing thing for me. In fact, I could hit the sweepstakes for maybe, maybe a million dollars, and I'll get what fifty thousand dollars a year for twenty years. And to leave Newark would not be my first consideration. You know, people say well I'd get myself a house out in the country. I would leave here and I'd go to North Carolina. I would move out to Parsippany or down to Lakehurst or out to West Side. No. That would not be my first consideration. That's my personal, you know.

Q: Well, Mrs. Powell, on behalf of the Krueger-Scott Mansion Historical History Society, I'm glad that we shared these hours together. I thank you for your interview.

Powell: Thank you.